

SOCIAL STUDIES

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Position Statement: Social Studies

Social Studies, an integrated study of the “social” sciences, is not considered to be one single discipline. The ultimate goal of social studies is to develop the civic competence and civic participation of Idaho’s youth, the citizens of today and tomorrow.

To accomplish this goal, it is recommended that local school districts develop a K-12 social studies curriculum that clearly identifies student learning in both knowledge and performance. The key components of the social studies curriculum are history, government, geography, economics, sociology and citizenship.

A strong emphasis should be placed on the important and enduring ideas, events and people that now affect students’ lives, and will serve as a foundation for the future. Students should recognize their roles, particularly as related to the living history of the United States.

In addition to a strong knowledge base, it is imperative that students develop the critical thinking skills necessary to participate fully in our democratic society. These skills should include the ability to acquire relevant information, organize data, develop balanced policies and arguments, construct new knowledge, and participate effectively as individuals and in groups.

Values are so central to our way of life that every social studies program should strive to develop student commitment to them. These include fundamental tenets such as right to individual dignity, equality of opportunity, justice, privacy, security, ownership of private property, life and liberty and their corresponding responsibilities. They include as well the basic freedoms of worship, speech, inquiry, assembly and participation in the political process.

It is important for the students of social studies to become aware of the values, complexities and dilemmas involved in any given issue. Competent citizens realize and understand the value of the sacrifice and benefits to various groups that are embedded in

potential courses of action, and recognize the value of compromise. Ultimately, informed citizens are able to develop well-reasoned positions consistent with basic democratic, social and political values.

Of special note is the understanding that authors of social studies materials represent the vast diversity of culture and opinions found in this nation. Consequently, differences of opinion dictate that school districts study carefully the social studies materials considered for purchase in their districts. School districts are encouraged to select instructional materials that support the locally developed curriculum.